



December 1, 2006

TO: All Superintendents and High School Principals

RE: Second Quarter Marketing and Public Relations Materials

This packet contains the marketing and communications materials to help you communicate the GPS second quarter theme "PLAN IT" to high school students and their parents, and to help you develop partnerships with businesses in your local communities. PLAN IT builds on the first quarter "DREAM IT" theme. You've already helped motivate students to dream big, now you – and parents, staff, and community members – can help them plan how to make those dreams come true.

As with the first quarter, the second quarter materials include flyers, postcards, sample letters, and other materials to help you enlist the help of your parents and staff and community members in encouraging students to take more responsibility for planning for their future.

You'll note that the materials strongly encourage parent involvement – not just with planning but also with other activities. Including and guiding parent involvement is essential because research shows parents have a strong influence on their kids:

- Students have better attendance, behavior, and grades when their parents show an interest in their courses and plans for the future.
- When parents have high expectations for their kids and communicate them clearly to their kids, the kids are more likely to have high expectations for themselves.
- Students try harder in school (although they may complain about it) when they know their parents are paying attention.

Parental involvement is also important because the new "student core curriculum plan" law requires parents to sign-off on student plans, and because most schools do not have staff capacity to be the sole source for creating and monitoring quality student planning.

All districts by now have received from the Department of Education the [technical assistance guidelines](#) and the technical assistance [supplement](#) that explains the student core curriculum plans as outlined in the 2006 law, and how they relate to model core curriculum and the 4-3-3-3 state graduation requirements. Communicating about these core curriculum plans to parents will greatly increase their implementation and their benefits to the student. This packet includes some tips to help you communicate with and get support from parents – which typically gets more difficult as students get older.

Remember the Iowa College Planning Center, in partnership with the Iowa College Student Aid Commission, offers planning tools free to all Iowa districts, and free training to help staff understand the tools, how they can be integrated into the classroom, and how to involve parents.

[Choices® Planner](#) is targeted to high school students and offers five different assessments to match them to various careers. Students can perform a database search for careers and schools, as well as look up information on specific majors, colleges, and occupations. Planner also allows students to create resumes, practice for job interviews, and design a career plan.

[Choices® Explorer](#) is targeted to middle school/junior high students and offers career and major exploration, personal interviews, and study tips.

Both programs connect students to career pathways and offer them a suggested four-year course plan that can be customized. Choices® also includes a portfolio section which allows users to record school activities and keep track of their favorite careers and colleges. A Professional Tools section is provided for administrators to track student progress, find sample lesson plans, and customize the system.

If you do not know your school's Choices® login, please call Megan Hogan at 515/242-3355 or 877/272-4692 to receive your site ID and password.

For training needs, please visit the [Iowa Choices](#) section of the Iowa College Student Aid Commission Website or contact Rebecca Bahl at rbahl@studentloan.org or 877/272-4692 x7483.

Because your student plans will be a requirement for all high school students going forward, please remember to put a “brand” on your planning process and tools, which will help set the perception of the tools, and will help you communicate about them to your stakeholders. The templates in this packet have applied the brand “GPS Student Portfolio” to the plans, but your district naturally can select its own. Whichever brand you use, remember to use it consistently on all of your materials.

If you need any communication materials from the first quarter DREAM IT theme, you will find them posted online at <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/829/956/>. That is also the location where we are posting our second quarter PLAN IT documents. Looking ahead, the third quarter theme is LEARN IT and starts in January, and the fourth quarter theme is DO IT and starts in May.

A few other general reminders about the GPS communications materials:

- Although the themes are designed to build throughout the year, districts can select their own timing for when each topic is introduced.
- The materials are designed to allow districts to customize each piece, inserting local information or changing the style to better meet local needs.